

A COMREL Becomes a Miracle

by LT Robert Jones, CHC, USNR



During a recent exercise called *COBRA GOLD*, Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 was located at a base camp on the airstrip in Utaphao, Thailand. RPSN Joshua Clark and I were planning Community Relations (COMREL) projects in the local area. One project would prove to have consequences that we could never have imagined.

During a previous exercise, we had talked with some staff non-commissioned officers about one of our Marines, CPL Matthew Scott, who had been adopted from Thailand. We wondered if the orphanage he was adopted from still existed.

When we arrived in the town of Pattaya for *COBRA GOLD*, we knew about the orphanage, but had no idea where it was. During liberty in Pattaya, we found small collection boxes for the orphanage posted at businesses throughout the town, but we were still unable to get clear-cut directions to the facility. Finally, we found a proprietor who had a collection box and knew where the orphanage was. A Marine in our unit asked some local residents for help and got a hand-drawn map to the orphanage. We pressed forward.

A few days later, we planned a site survey, then the COMREL itself. Upon arriving, we found the orphanage to be in great shape, staffed by motivated and dedicated caregivers and filled with youngsters. We met with the office manager, Ms. Chomjinda, who then ushered us in to meet Father Ray Brennan.

Miraculously, they were able to find CPL Scott's original paperwork! His adoptive father, an Army MP, had adopted him from the orphanage 20 years earlier. Mr. Scott still supports the orphanage and had sent a photo of CPL Scott in his Marine Dress Blues. What a moment for us all! Cpl Scott and Father Ray talked and caught up on old times. The youngsters at the orphanage really took to all the Marines, especially to CPL Scott, who was a type of hero.

The Thai military got involved and was able to assist in the location of CPL Scott's biological mother. After much effort, she was found! When

the big moment came, mother and son embraced in a clinch that seemed never-ending.

"It was a miracle to be able to return and find my mom, something I've always wanted to do," CPL Scott said. The Columbia, South Carolina, resident said it was "a miracle" to be able to meet his mother, 44-year-old Tom Horn-ngam, a construction worker.

The Public Affairs Officer and the Thai military did a masterful job of providing interpreters and transportation.

His mother, speaking through an interpreter, told



reporters she had thought she would never see her son again.

"I'm happy that he is not angry at me for giving him up for adoption," she said.

"She had to do what she had to do," Scott responded. "I understand. I'm just happy she can see me now."

Ministry as a Navy chaplain provides some of the most exciting and unexpected miracles—you never know what miracle God has in store!